

Jeju Navy Base, THAAD, and Global Alliance

By Choi Sung-hee, ROK

Hello, my name is Choi Sung-hee. Thank you for having me in this important forum. I have been living in Gangeong village, Jeju Island, Korea, for the last 11years so far. I have been joining the anti-Jeju navy base struggle. I am also fighting to stop the militarization of Jeju and beyond. Today, I will share my talk focused on the danger of THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) and Jeju navy base.

The United States is moving its focus to the Indo-Pacific region. And not only the United States, but also some European countries such as the UK, France, and Germany are moving their influence toward the Indo-Pacific region. For example, The UK is to deploy two light aircraft carriers in the region from August.

Many nations including South Korea are being integrated into the US Indo-Pacific strategy. Under the US-led global alliance, each nation goes beyond its own so-called 'defense' boundary. The global alliance is to confront nations such as China, Russia, and North Korea. The United States is pressuring her alliance nations including South Korea to join her Quad strategy pivoted by the United States, Australia, Japan, and India. South Korea has not expressed her participation in the Quad. However, even though South Korea does not join the Quad, the ROK-US-Japan trilateral alliance makes South Korea join the US domination strategy regardless of her participation in Quad. And as Koh Young-Dae, Solidarity for Peace And Reunification of Korea notes, the trilateral alliance is centered on the missile defense system.

The Jeju navy base and THAAD base in Soseong-ri, Seongju are parts of the US-led missile defense system. It is above all, because of radar that THAAD forcefully deployed in Soseong-ri, Seongju, main land of Korea, is threatening. The radius of THAAD radar reaches to some key military spots of China, Russia, not to mention North Korea. Unless THAAD is withdrawn and Korea war officially ends, the peace of Northeast Asia, not to mention Korean peninsula, is far-off. The United States has been constantly upgrading THAAD system. And with the launch of the Biden government, the oppression against the residents in Soseong-ri and their supporters has become more horrible than at any other time. It is noteworthy that the current US war secretary Lloyd James Austin III is a former board member of arms corporation, Raytheon.

Otherwise, the Jeju navy base which was completed in 2016 is officially a South Korean base. However, because of the ROK-US mutual defense treaty, the United States can use South Korean militaries and facilities any time she wants. The base is also a homeport for the most advanced warships in South Korea. Warships are sent from here to join the RIMPAC or the expanded Gulf of Aden including the Hormuz strait. The South Korean government is to deploy a mobile fleet command whose flag ships would be light aircraft carriers with Osprey in the Jeju navy base within years. The South Korean government is also secretly driving for a nuclear submarine. It is also in process of tests for the successful launch of SLBM. Then South Korea, being already the 6th military power in the world, would be the 8th nation who succeeds in launching the SLBM. The South Korean navy's arms build-up in the maritime area would contribute to US Indo-Pacific strategy in the region.

Lastly it should be noted that the ROK-US cooperation in space is being strengthened. Three high military officers from the US, Japan, and South Korea, including John J. Raymond, US Space Force chief, had a secret meeting in Hawaii last year. Recently, in Jeju, it became known that the National Satellite Integrated Operation Center had been driven concealed from the eyes of Island people, as well as Island Council. It was the National Space Committee who decided on the project in 2019. The Committee includes the NIS and Ministry of National Defense. Even though the South Korea Aerospace committee says the center would only serve for civilian purposes, people think the role of center would not be separated from the US Indo-Pacific strategy.

A good news is the Jeju 2nd airport project which Jeju islanders have struggled against for the last six years has in fact dissipated. However, it is not yet cleared for complete cancellation. People are continuously paying attention because the government may try to enforce the project again. The project will be very likely for an air force base with the cover of a civilian airport.

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Choi Sung-hee joins the struggle opposing the Jeju navy base and militarization of jeju. She also joins other struggles such as “No to the Jeju Second Airport (which is suspected to be an air force base)” and “No to the National Satellite Integrated Operation Center” currently driven in Jeju. She has worked in the village international team. She also works for the Gangjeong Peace Network, Association of Gangjeong Villagers Against the Jeju Navy Base, People Making Jeju a Demilitarized Peace Island, and Inter-Island Solidarity for Peace. She is also a Korean board member of Global Network against Weapons and Nuclear Power in Space. See savejejunow.org